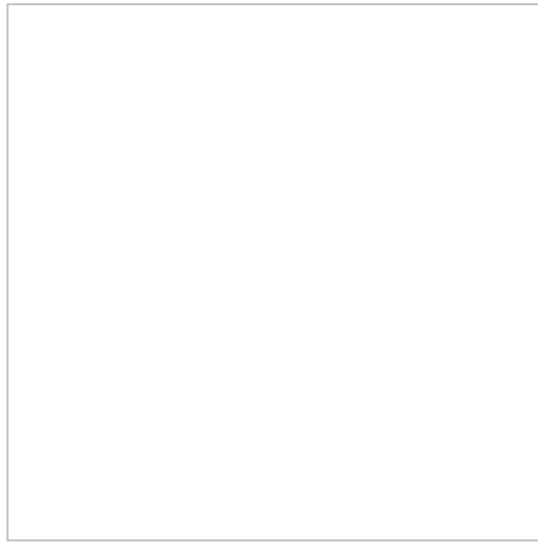


# An Evaluation of AVP Workshops in Aotearoa/New Zealand



by

Brian Phillips

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Wellington, New Zealand  
2002

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By Brian Phillips

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Brian Phillips

# Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Executive summary</i>	<i>vi</i>
<b>1</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Origins of the report .....	1
Purpose of the evaluation study .....	1
Objectives of the current evaluation .....	2
<b>2</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Background</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Development of AVP .....	3
Description of the AVP workshops .....	5
<i>Overview</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>The workshops</i>	<i>5</i>
<b>3</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Previous research</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<i>Summary</i>	<i>12</i>
<b>4</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>The evaluation process</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Objectives and strategy .....	13
End-of-workshop evaluations .....	13
Development of the national survey questionnaire .....	16
Mail-out survey process .....	17
Ethical considerations .....	18
<b>5</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Survey results</b> .....	<b>19</b>
Description of sample.....	19
Survey findings .....	21
<i>Did AVP workshops help?</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Open-ended responses</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>General themes from written responses</i>	<i>28</i>
<b>6</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Discussion and recommendations</b> .....	<b>30</b>
Discussion.....	30
Conclusion and recommendations .....	32
<b>References</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>35</b>

List of Tables

Table 1 The philosophical position of AVPA. .... 4

Table 2 The goals strategies and objectives of AVPA. .... 4

Table 3 Demographics of end-of-workshop evaluation sample. .... 14

Table 4 Themes derived from the workshop evaluations. .... 14

Table 5 Distribution of survey questionnaires..... 19

Table 6 Distribution according to ethnic identity. .... 20

Table 7 Distribution of sample by level of AVP workshop. .... 20

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Theoretical model for the mechanism of change for AVP .....	11
Figure 2. Helpfulness by workshop level .....	21
Figure 3. Helping to achieve peaceful resolution .....	22
Figure 4. Helping to see other viewpoints .....	22
Figure 5. Helping to trust others .....	23
Figure 6. Helping to reveal choices.....	23
Figure 7. Helping to feel greater self-respect.....	23
Figure 8. Helping to take greater responsibility .....	24
Figure 9. Helping achieve greater understanding of feelings and actions.....	24

## Executive summary

- The purpose of the evaluation study was defined in the research brief as “*an appraisal of the effectiveness of the work done by AVP workshops*” (Maxwell & Roberson, 2001, p. 2). The approach has drawn upon a mix of quantitative and qualitative data from past workshop participants from both community and prison workshops. This includes: 1) an analysis of routine end-of-workshop evaluations, and 2) a national mail-out survey of past workshop participants.
- A review of the published literature on previous studies of AVP shows that these are limited in number and in the utility of their findings due to a poor understanding of the aims and philosophical underpinnings of AVP. They have been of small samples, usually of male inmates and evaluating only the immediate impact of the Basic Workshop.
- A total of 81 end-of-workshop evaluation forms and 146 survey questionnaires were analysed. Unlike earlier studies, this current evaluation examines all workshop levels, involves larger numbers of both women and men, and includes community and prison-based participants.
- The major finding of this study is that 94% of all survey responses report their AVP workshop experience to be helpful.
  - This is consistent across each of the major workshop levels and across each of the issues explored in the survey questions, namely: resolving difficult issues, recognising other’s viewpoints, trusting others, perceiving more choices, gaining greater self-respect, taking greater responsibility, and enhancing understanding their feelings and actions.
  - Written responses show that the workshop material is effecting change and being integrated into respondents’ individual everyday lives. They also clearly show the importance that is placed on experience as a way of understanding how to act and be peaceful.
- These results support a view that AVP in Aotearoa/New Zealand is achieving its stated goal of “*empowering men, women and youth to manage conflict in non-violent, creative ways*” (AVPA, c.1994, p. 2).
- As a result of this evaluation, the following major recommendations are offered:
  - AVP workshops continue to be offered to as wide a group of people as is possible, including seeking a return of prison-based workshops and/or as an adjunctive to other programmes aimed at returning inmates to community living.
  - AVP workshops increase their focus on: a) development of trust and b) enhancing understanding of feelings and actions.
  - Redesign end-of-workshop evaluation forms to be anonymous and directly seek specific comments about problematic issues for workshop participants; and this be separated from seeking interest in further workshops.



# 1

## Introduction

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### Origins of the report

This evaluation study has been undertaken as a result of a small Grant provided by the J.R. McKenzie Trust for the purpose of producing a report on the effectiveness of the Alternatives to Violence Project in Aotearoa/New Zealand (AVPA). As a result, in early 2001 guidance was sought from Dr Gabrielle Maxwell who, along with Shirley Roberson, provided a research brief to assist with an appropriate design and focus for the evaluation study (See Appendix B). Consequently this was approved by the AVPA National Executive later in the same year (Appendix A).

The approach suggested by Maxwell & Roberson (2001) most closely fits what Greene (1994) describes as pragmatic. As such, it draws upon an eclectic, or mixed, design of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Such evaluation designs are typically aimed at answering questions about:

- What needs improvement?
- How well does the programme achieve the organisation's goals?
- And, how well does it meet the needs of those who use the programme?

Readers of this report are invited to judge for themselves how effectively this report has answered these questions.

### Purpose of the evaluation study

As the term 'evaluation' is used to cover a broad range of activities, clarification of the term is needed before describing the approach taken for this study.

Patton (1987) defines evaluation as:

*The systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of information about the activities and outcomes of actual programs in order for interested persons to make judgements about specific aspects of what the program is doing and improve the program.*  
(p. 145)

Patton's definition makes it clear that evaluation is driven by the needs and specific purposes of interested persons. A key word in this definition is **programme**. A programme can be viewed as a collection of discrete activities that, when put together, has a coherent thread and purpose (sometimes referred to as programme integrity). The coherency of a programme is often a highly important issue to its success. In this current study, the focus for evaluation is on the AVP workshops, rather than the discrete activities that make up the each of the workshops and is driven by the need to inform those who deliver them.

Although there are a number of broad approaches to evaluation of programmes, typically, evaluation is undertaken to answer questions of efficacy, value and quality. There is also a political element associated with the evaluation of any programme. That is, evaluation questions are shaped by who is asking them, and

the reasons they have for asking. For instance, what is seen as 'effective' for one group may be seen as 'ineffective' by another (Greene, 1994, p. 531). This is easily seen in the competing interest groups that each have an investment in any government social programme (albeit on a bigger scale than AVP!). Each interest group evaluates the programme according to their own definitions of efficacy, value and quality and they are rarely the same.

One way of approaching the complexity and inherent contradictions set up by these competing interests is to ensure that an evaluation is undertaken based upon the stated philosophy, aims and objectives of the programme under appraisal (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). This approach is able to inform the debate, rather than try and take a position on the debate. In order to do this the evaluation method and criteria have to be consistent with the theoretical perspective of the social programme. This requires the researcher to clearly establish the underlying theoretical framework being utilised. As shall be seen in the following chapter, this has not always been the case in previous studies of AVP.

While I have briefly discussed programme evaluation above, it is important to distinguish this from evaluation of a 'treatment' or 'therapy' programme. Classically, treatment (or therapy), and treatment programmes, are instituted on the basis of an assessment leading to the formulation of a diagnosis and then to treatment. Consequently, evaluation of **treatment** is based upon 'curing' or ameliorating the problems associated with the diagnosed disorder (Sumich, Andrews, & Hunt, 1995, p. 4). This form of evaluation follows because there is an assumed or established link between diagnosis and treatment. Clearly, AVP workshops are not a

'treatment' for a diagnosis or diagnosis-related problem. Stephen Angell (c.1994) emphatically states this when he says that instead, "*AVP is about personal growth*" (p. 2).

## Objectives of the current evaluation

The evaluation undertaken for this report has, as its stated objective, to "*undertake an appraisal of the effectiveness of the work done by AVP workshops*" (Maxwell & Roberson, 2001, p. 1).

To achieve this, the first step taken has been to:

- Establish the aims of AVP, how AVP goes about achieving those aims? and,
- What does AVP base this approach upon?

These two questions are discussed in Chapter 2: Background. To locate this report in a wider context, previous studies that have focussed on AVP are reviewed in Chapter 3: Previous Research. These two chapters set the context for conducting the current evaluation.

The next step for the evaluation has been to establish the type of data required for the evaluation, and the processes for collecting that data. This is described in Chapter 4: The Evaluation Process. In Chapter 5: Survey Results, the overall characteristics of the data obtained from a nationwide survey of past workshop participants are detailed and analysed. These results are then summarised and discussed in Chapter 6: Discussion and Recommendations.

# 2

## Background

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This chapter provides a brief historical background of the development of AVP in Aotearoa/New Zealand and contextualises this current study by providing a brief description of the aims and goals including how AVP goes about achieving those aims.

### Development of AVP

#### History

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) began as a collaboration between a group of Quakers and a number of inmates of Greenhaven Prison in New York State in 1975. The inmates had requested assistance from the Quakers to develop a programme addressing issues of violence for young offenders (Bitel & Edgar, 1998; Garver & Reitan, 1995). The Quakers, or Religious Society of Friends, have a long history of religious persecution and experience of conscientious objection to social injustice and war. This included recent experience in training demonstration marshals in nonviolent methods during the Vietnam war protests (Curreen, 1994; Flanders et al., 1999). Quakers were therefore able to draw upon 300 years of experience in nonviolent approaches to conflict in responding to the inmates' request.

In the years since the inception of the Alternatives to Violence Project at Greenhaven Prison, the concepts and instructions for AVP workshops have been gradually refined into a series of manuals setting out the principles,

processes and ideas for effective delivery of the workshops. Twenty-five years later, the project has spread globally, and is now offered in prisons and the community in Canada, Britain, Costa Rica, Ireland, Australia, Germany, Russia, Hungary, Kenya, and South Africa as well as other states of the US (Bitel, 1999).

In 1991, Quakers in New Zealand invited Stephen Angell to visit from the United States to assist in establishing AVP in New Zealand. Following this visit, the Alternatives to Violence Project – Aotearoa (AVPA) commenced in May 1992 in Auckland. Since then, AVP in New Zealand has been undergoing a continual process of change to suit the cultural and social environment of Aotearoa-New Zealand (AVPA, c.1994).

Since its beginnings in New Zealand, an estimated 6000 people in the community and a further 5000 prison inmates have attended AVP workshops (D. Cook, personal communication, May 2002). There are approximately 100 trained voluntary facilitators and team leaders. In addition, there is a similar number who support the workshops through other activities such as the provision of cooking, cleaning and transportation.

AVPA is a non-profit organisation. Although initiated by Quakers, and there is a continued ongoing association, AVPA is not a sectarian organisation but a diverse voluntary community group (Flanders et al., 1999).

AVPA<sup>1</sup> is an incorporated body organised through a national executive committee of AVP regions made up of the representatives from the six regions that constitute the project in New Zealand. The six regions each have a local committee, who in turn appoint their representative to the national committee. Representation also includes up to two Maori representatives and one representative from the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends (Quakers). The six regions are currently: Auckland, Waikato, Tamarunui, Hawkes Bay, Wellington, and Blenheim/Top of the South Island. AVPA is almost exclusively voluntary. The only employee of the organisation being a part-time National Co-ordinator and a couple of regional coordinators. Funding for the organisation is obtained through donations. Although fees are charged for attending AVP workshops, these are substantially used to cover costs and out-of-pocket expenses.

Mission statement and vision  
 The philosophical premise of AVP in

Table 1 The philosophical position of AVPA.

---

The Alternatives to Violence Project is an organisation of volunteers offering experiential workshops that empower individuals to liberate themselves and others from the burden of violence. Our fundamental belief is that there is a power for peace and good in everyone and that this power has the ability to transform people and situations. AVP builds on a spiritual basis of respect and caring for self and others, working both in prisons and in the community. (AVPA, c.1994, p. 2)

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<sup>1</sup> AVPA is a national co-ordinating structure and does not run AVP workshops of itself; these are run by the regions. Not all countries have a national coordinating body.

Aotearoa/New Zealand is set out in Table 1 below. The key terms in this statement is the position of AVPA as a voluntary organisation and a fundamental belief in the liberational power of peace. Additionally, this statement asserts a fundamental belief that change is brought about through a spiritual basis of respect and caring.

Table 2 The goals strategies and objectives of AVPA.

---

We are working towards the creation of a non-violent society. We recognise that there is a serious problem with violence in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Our goal is to reduce the level of violence by reducing the need that we feel to resort to violence as a solution. Our process uses the life experience of participants as our main learning resource, drawing on that experience to deal constructively with the violence in ourselves and in our lives. It is our objective to empower men, women and youth to manage conflict in non-violent, creative ways. (AVPA, c.1994, p. 2).

---

AVPA's philosophical statement is further elaborated into a statement of specific goals, strategies and objectives shown in Table 2 above. This reiterates a central concern regarding the issue of violence and a goal to bring about a reduction in the level of violence. Further, the strategies to bring this about are made explicit. These are: to address the need to resort to violence, and to draw upon life experience as a learning resource. Additionally, AVPA states that it's objective is to empower people to use non-violent ways of managing conflict.

The philosophical position of AVP, its goals, strategies and objectives provide specific

statements upon which the project's activities may be evaluated.

## Description of the AVP workshops

### Overview

AVP has developed a strategy to achieve its aim of reducing violence based on a series of workshops that are organised in a particular way. As will be described below, the philosophical premises stated in Table 1 are carried through into every aspect of the workshops.

AVP seeks to reduce violence by *“encouraging and training people in the use of creative nonviolent strategies for handling situations in which people often resort to violence”* (Garver & Reitan, 1995, p. 3). It does this through an experiential approach. Participants come together for workshops that facilitate a sense of community for a short period of time in which collectively, they are also invited to validate each other's experience. In this safe environment they have the opportunity to learn and try out more effective ways of: communication, affirmation, conflict resolution, dealing with anger, fear, and respecting the other person and themselves.

### The workshops

There is a standard approach to the workshops that has developed through the contributions of facilitators over the years. This collective wisdom is captured in AVP workshop manuals. It is important to note that the workshop manuals are primarily concerned with **process** rather than **content**. This point will be returned to in the discussion below.

Workshop manuals *“provide a mix of games and group exercises designed to provoke laughter, co-operation, trust and in some cases, other strong emotions”* (Joy, 1995, p. 14). These collective life experiences of both facilitators and participants become the experiential material that the workshop processes. As such, there is a strong focus on process, rather than set tasks to the programme. On this, the *AVP Basic Manual* (Flanders et al., 1999) states that *“the essential thing to remember about AVP workshops is that they, too, are a process that allows people to experience the way of non-violence”* (p. A-3) (original emphasis).

The structure of the programme is therefore concerned with providing **experiences**, and facilitating the processing of these in a way that encourages non-violent approaches to living. An essential ingredient for the process of the workshops therefore is **voluntarism**. This principle applies to both facilitators and participants.

It is worth noting that this is a very different approach to that of most treatment programmes directed toward stopping violence or managing anger. Treatment approaches, usually delivered or at least developed by professionals, tend to have a focus on **teaching** the participant about causes of conflict, anger and violence, and seek to change specific associated behaviours and attitudes. In more recent years, such programmes are usually based on a cognitive-behavioural theory of psychology. The Alternatives to Violence Project differs, in that it is experiential rather than conceptual, and spiritual rather than behaviouristic (Garver & Reitan, 1995).

Participation in AVP workshops is open to any adult or older adolescent<sup>2</sup>. They usually take place over a weekend, commencing Friday evening and ending Sunday evening. Workshops are run in both community and prison settings. However, the prison workshops have now largely ceased due to a recent change in policy by the Department of Corrections.

There are three main workshops, each building on the former: Basic, Advanced, and Training-for-Facilitators. All workshops are grounded in experiential learning, *“there is no formal teaching and the ethos of the group is that all people have experienced alternatives to violence in their lifetime”* (Bitel et al., 1998, p. 2). The life experience that people bring to the workshops, including that of the facilitators, is shared. This life experience becomes the material from which everyone can collectively learn.

The workshops aim to set up expectations of community, and with it, the supportiveness and respect toward its members that the notion of community embodies. Within this context participants are encouraged to share their experiences, particularly those that are generally avoided. Various strategies are set out in the workshop manuals that guide facilitators to enable this to happen. Another important characteristic of the workshops (and very different from treatment programmes) is that the facilitating team are also participants within the workshop that they are facilitating. Facilitators also have a role in modelling many of the exercises.

Each workshop has four main goals:

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<sup>2</sup> A programme is available for younger people, called HIPP, that is based on AVP and usually offered through participating schools.

1. *To cultivate a climate of affirmation and openness and a sense of the worth of self and others among the participants;*
2. *To build a community among its participants, one in which mutual trust and sharing is possible;*
3. *To teach participant show to overcome those communication barriers which are so often at the heart of intolerance and thoughtlessness;*
4. *To teach some of the basic approaches towards resolving conflicts so that the needs and interests of all conflicting parties can be accommodated.*

(Garver & Reitan, 1995, p. 4)

As well as the four goals listed above, there are some common features to all workshops. These are summarised as follows:

- *AVP is not therapy. It is concerned with personal growth and changes in attitude to self and others.*
- *AVP workshops are experiential and intensive.*
- *AVP workshops include fun and humour.*
- *AVP workshops give people an experience of cooperative community and trusting relationships.*
- *AVP workshops draw out from participants their hidden knowledge of themselves, their needs and aspirations, and their ability to find creative alternatives.*
- *AVP facilitators take part in the workshop’s activities and exercises, so that everyone present is both teacher and learner.*
- *Matter shared in AVP workshops is confidential.*

(AVPA, c.1994, p. 3)

There is a progressive nature to the three main workshops. The Basic Workshop focuses on respect for oneself and others, communication

skills, community and building trust, co-operation, and begins to practice specific conflict resolution skills (Bitel et al., 1998; Bitel & Edgar, 1998). The second workshop, or Advanced Workshop, provides an opportunity to go deeper into the issues of conflict by following a theme nominated by the participants. Typically, this might be stereotyping, power, anger, gender, forgiveness, and so forth.

Further personal development is obtained through the opportunity to train as a facilitator. A deeper level of experiential learning is obtained by being part of the facilitating team and learning to manage the complexities of the processes

involved. This stands in contrast to the position of a facilitator of a traditional treatment programme, where the role is that of an expert imparting his or her knowledge to the participants who are presumed to have little or no expertise in the subject.

Given that the nature of the role of facilitator is important to the successful conduct of the workshops, there are other workshops for facilitators in addition to a process of mentoring provided by more experienced AVP facilitators. For those facilitators who are invited to undertake Team Leader Training there is a further process of 'apprenticeship'.

# 3

## Previous research

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There is a limited amount of published research on the Alternatives to Violence Project. Two are studies of AVP in New Zealand. The earlier study is by Merlin Curreen (1994), who evaluated a Basic Workshop in Auckland Prison consisting of 15 participants, while the later study is by Veronica Watt (1998) who evaluated Basic Workshops run in three different New Zealand prisons. There were 46 participants in this study. Elsewhere, an Australian study by Valerie Joy (1995) was undertaken at Long Bay Prison in Sydney with 16 inmates of an Advanced Workshop. A larger study of 39 inmates has been conducted in Britain by Mark Bitel et al (1998). Unlike the other three studies, a third of this sample were women. However, only the Basic Workshop was evaluated.

Curreen (1994) evaluated particular outcomes of the Basic Workshop at Auckland Prison East Division in October 1993 on behalf of the Department of Justice, which was not long after AVP first commenced in New Zealand. He evaluated the workshop using a specific psychological measure (*State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory*) to evaluate a person's disposition and response to anger. A questionnaire was also developed that sought information about aspects of the workshop that are assumed to be important to an anti-violence workshop. Both were administered before and after the workshop.

The findings of Curreen's report noted evidence of moderate changes in behaviour as an outcome

of the workshop. He also observed that the programme was very popular with inmates, and that prisoners spoke very highly of it. He suggested that this positive regard could be regarded as an achievement in itself. He also observed that all participants "*enjoyed the course and felt that they had benefited from it*" (Curreen, 1994, p. 20). This was supported by other results that showed improved communication and changes in "*attitude*".

However, the questionnaire, which included seeking information on past victimisation and present counselling needs, raised certain expectations that intruded upon the dynamics of the workshop, compromising the integrity of the workshop programme and processes (Angell, c.1994; Bitel et al., 1998, p. 10). Curreen (1994) himself notes in his report that the evaluation "*had an effect on this group, changing its customary focus and content to some extent*" (p. 3).

The approach taken by Curreen, demonstrated by the content of the questionnaire and use of a specific psychological test, appears to have been premised on the assumptions of an anti-violence **treatment** programme. Curreen's (1994) comments reinforce this view when he criticises the lack of what he labels "*violence education*" (p. 4), in comparison to other anti-violence programmes. That is, the AVP workshop was evaluated **as if** it was a treatment programme



rather than being a form of “*personal growth*” (Angell, c.1994). Stephen Angell further critiqued Curreen’s study on the grounds that:

1. *It doesn’t focus on what AVP is really about, and*
2. *It takes just a single piece of the programme and appears to be comparing it to the total scope of some other programmes.*

(Angell, c.1994, p. 1)

For the purpose of informing delivery of AVP workshops, Curreen’s study provides very limited useful information about the efficacy, value and quality. However, the report was written on behalf of the Department of Justice and presumably was responding to their interests, rather than those of the Alternatives to Violence Project.

The second New Zealand study by Watt (1998), who evaluated Basic Workshops conducted in three different New Zealand prisons, used a questionnaire to measure change in violent attitudes and behaviour and incorporated a psychological assessment tool called the *Violent Incidents Scale*. Watt describes this scale as a self-report adaptation of the original tool that was designed to record incidents of violent behaviour by hospitalised psychiatric patients. Again, the approach taken in this evaluation appears to assume that the Basic Workshop is a self-contained treatment programme designed to measurably reduce violence. In this regard, Watt (1998) did not find any statistically significant<sup>3</sup> measure showing that AVP workshops changed the number of violent incidents recorded.

Nonetheless, Watt noted several other positive outcomes. In follow-up staff questionnaires and

facilitator interviews she observed that the most commonly cited strength of the workshop was the openness and sharing. Conflict resolution and nonviolent strategies were the most commonly cited gain noted by participants. Additionally, prison staff impressions of the programme were generally positive, with specialist staff having a slightly more positive response than custodial staff. Such observations suggest the workshops had an impact on participants and that these changes were different to what the *Violent Incidents Scale* was designed to measure.

In an Australian study of AVP, Valerie Joy (1995) evaluated an Advanced Workshop with 16 participants in Long Bay, a maximum security prison in Sydney, New South Wales. This study was carried out using *The Way I See It* (TWISI) questionnaire. The TWISI is a self-report tool originally designed for use with young people to evaluate a conflict resolution programme in the United States (cited in Joy, 1995). The results of Joy’s study shows that the group overall made significant changes in their attitude toward conflict. A shift was particularly noted in the use of language as the preferred means to deal with conflict instead of fighting, while yet other prisoners would simply use avoidance. However, she also observed that the men gave little attention to the value of their feelings. Joy speculates that this was due to a maximum security prison being an unsafe place for this type of expression to occur.

A valuable addition to this study was a qualitative follow-up of the men on a monthly basis during which case notes were made. Her case notes showed substantial positive changes over a period of time that could not be captured in the shorter study. An interesting aspect was that these changes were strikingly idiosyncratic. How the inmates applied AVP in their lives appeared

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<sup>3</sup> Statistical significance is reached when the measurement is greater than that calculated as being possible, simply on the basis of chance.

to depend greatly on the circumstances of individual lives, but they nevertheless seemed to draw on their AVP experience to make these changes.

Joy (1995) also reports that such was the impact of the AVP workshops that support, administrative and custodial staff began their own AVP training in community-based AVP courses. Significantly, she reports that inmates of the maximum-security prison who have experienced AVP would “*stand up and tell the other inmates about the value of the course*” (Joy, 1995, p. 67).

Joy’s study also formed the basis of a submission to a NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into prison violence (Standing Committee on Social Issues 1995, cited in Joy, 1995) which, in part, recommended:

*That the Minister for Corrective Services:*

- *Investigate the feasibility of allowing Alternatives to Violence to conduct weekend workshops in Correctional Centres; [and]*
- *Consider using AVP workshops as a staff training option for personnel of the Department of Corrective Services*

(cited in Joy, 1995, p. 64)

A major evaluation of AVP that takes an entirely different approach has been piloted in Britain by Mark Bitel et al. (1998). This study was undertaken in part, to define a set of meaningful outcomes for evaluating AVP. A further impetus for this study arose out of a larger international debate on the difficulties of evaluating conflict resolution work (Bitel et al., 1998).

Bitel et al. (1998) argues that measurable variables such as reconviction rates or incidences of violence are not the explicit aims of AVP and therefore, although it may satisfy the

interest of other parties, they are in fact irrelevant to the evaluation of AVP. Instead, they have advocated a position taken by Pawson & Tilley (1997) that evaluation should be theory-driven.

To this end Bitel (1999) has developed the theoretical model outlined in Figure 1 (on page 11, below). This model identifies four key components of change for AVP. These are: builds self-worth and self-esteem, facilitates trust, revelation of choices, and developing responsibility. As can be seen in Figure 1, he has juxtaposed these against criminogenic background factors in the left column, that have been statistically correlated to violent criminal behaviour.<sup>4,5</sup>

McGuire & Priestly (1995) have reviewed a sizeable literature on offender treatment programmes and concluded that no single outstanding approach worked to reduce recidivism. They identified six criteria for effective programmes: risk classification, criminogenic needs, responsivity, community based, treatment modality, and programme integrity. Bitel et al. (1998) argues that AVP “*fully meets*” two of these six criteria: 1) responsivity, because it is a highly participatory and interactive process; and 2) programme integrity, because volunteers are well-trained and supported. He argues further that AVP partly meets two more criteria as it targets criminogenic needs and is community organised.

The pilot study by Bitel et al (1998) was undertaken in three British prisons; one of which was a women’s prison. An interview schedule was developed after an extensive consultative

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<sup>4</sup> I include the term *criminal* here to distinguish this discussion of violence from violence that is sanctioned by society; such as rugby, corporal punishment, boxing, etc.

<sup>5</sup> See McGuire & Priestly (1995) for further discussion on criminogenic factors.

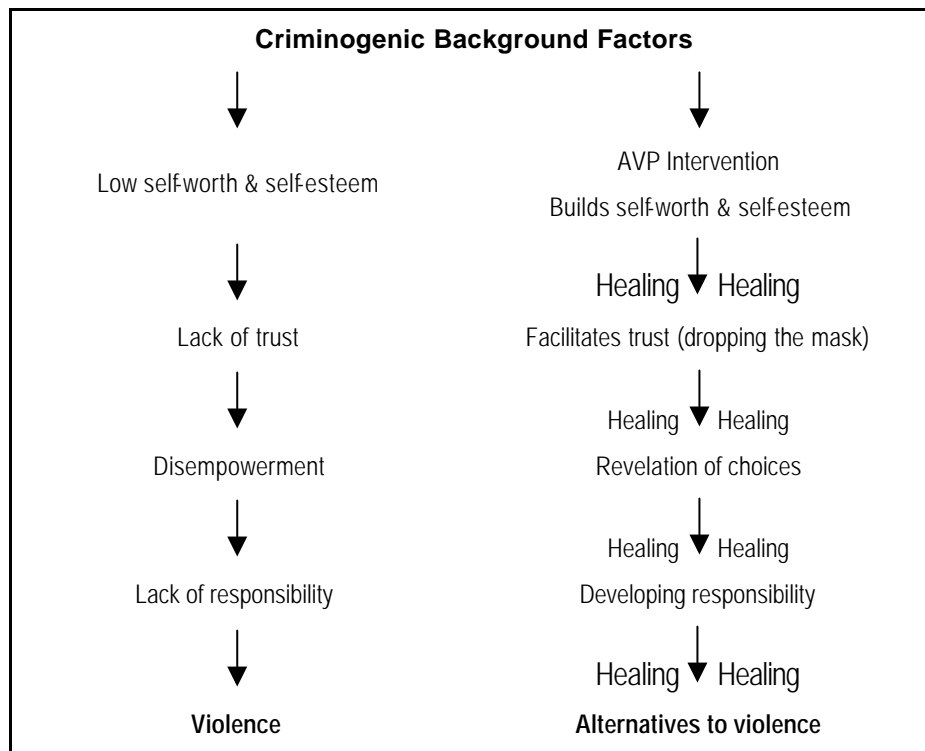


Figure 1. Theoretical model for the mechanism of change for AVP

Note: From The Alternatives to Violence Project: A path to restoration, by Bitel, 1999, *Prison Service Journal*, 123, p. 10. Used with permission.

process that arrived at eighteen outcome statements for AVP workshops approved by the British Co-ordinating committee. These outcomes could be further summarised into four broad themes: problem solving; choice and change; communication and relating to people; and self-esteem (Bitel et al., 1998, p. 22). Not all eighteen outcomes were targeted by the interview questionnaire developed for the pilot study. Ten outcomes were prioritised for this purpose.

A total of 39 inmates of three British prisons who had completed a Basic Workshop were interviewed. Twelve of these were women. From the results of this survey, Bitel et al. (1998) found that six of the ten prioritised outcomes were achieved to a highly successful degree. These were as follows:

1. *Develop conflict resolution skills of active listening, assertiveness, co-operation and empathy*

2. *Experience affirmation*
3. *Explore their own role and responsibility in confrontational situations and see possible alternatives*
4. *Develop and experience trust within a supportive community environment*
5. *Recognise other people's point of view*
6. *Have possible opportunities to become AVP facilitators*

(Bitel et al., 1998, p. 45)

A further three outcomes were regarded as achieved to a moderately successful degree:

7. *Recognise that they always have choices*
8. *Understood the relationship between feelings and actions*
9. *Resolve familiar problems in non-violent/non-destructive ways by changing patterns of behaviour*

(Bitel et al., 1998, p. 46)

The one remaining outcome was regarded as being achieved to a low degree of success. This was:

*10. Improve their understanding of the skills and spirit for dealing productively with conflict inside and outside the prison system*

(Bitel et al., 1998, p. 46)

Examining the results in light of the theoretical model (Figure 1, above), Bitel et al. (1998) concluded that AVP contributed to enhanced self-worth and self-esteem, and to the development of trust. Additionally, they stated that participants were enabled to understand that they have choices when confronted with conflict. However, greater success in achieving realisation of choices was needed before determining if AVP workshops facilitate development of responsibility leading to the practice of alternatives to violence (the final step before healing). These results suggest that participants of the Basic Workshop make substantial movement through the proposed model.

The UK *Pilot Study* (Bitel et al., 1998) was limited to interviews with participants of the Basic Workshop. A study involving participants who have completed more advanced workshops however, may show even further progression toward developing responsibility leading to practising alternatives to violence. As the *Pilot Study* was also conducted soon after the workshop, questions remain as to whether changes would be longer standing.

## Summary

In summary, the two new Zealand studies (Curren, 1994; Watt, 1998), described above, were both premised on AVP being like an anti-

violence **treatment** programme. The outcomes of these studies are therefore of highly limited value to an evaluation of AVP as they do not respond to the stated aims and theoretical framework of the workshops. Nevertheless, each of the studies observed positive changes in participants that can be directly related to the aims of AVP.

In contrast to these two studies, the UK *Pilot Study* by Bitel et al (1998) took a significantly different approach using a qualitative research design that sets out to “*investigate the impact that AVP has on participants in British prisons*” (p. i). This approach was explicitly driven by outcomes that AVP was seeking to achieve. As such, it produced findings that directly informed AVP about the quality and outcomes of the workshops they had provided. These were, that AVP helped to develop: broader understandings of violence, greater ownership of responsibility for conflict, acquisition of skills for non-violence, increased insight into choices when confronted with conflict.

In conclusion, the research on AVP to date appears minimal. Studies are mostly limited to small-scale male prison groups. The criteria for evaluation have been largely based on a misunderstanding of AVP as an anti-violence **treatment** programme. Nonetheless, these studies show strong indications that changes do occur among participants. The case study approach by Joy (1995) suggests that these changes become stronger with the greater depth of experience obtained through the Advanced Workshop. The evaluation approach taken by Bitel et al. (1998) provides a soundly argued basis to evaluate AVP and provides explicit outcome statements to guide an evaluation.

# 4

## The evaluation process

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Approval to conduct this study was obtained from the AVPA National Executive committee in March 2001 (see Appendix A). This chapter outlines the processes undertaken for the conduct of this study. The chapter begins with a description of the overall strategy, then the development of the survey questionnaire is described. Finally, the method used for the conduct of the survey of past workshop participants is outlined.

### Objectives and strategy

The stated objective of this study is “*to undertake an appraisal of the work done by AVP workshops*” (Maxwell & Roberson, 2001, p. 2). From the outset, certain specific information was deemed to be required. The feedback to AVPA from the study needed to include self-report about the following:

- *Violent and abusive behaviours;*
- *Pro-social behaviour, perceived personal safety and trust, tolerance, openness and personal relationships, self-esteem and wellbeing;*
- *Impact [of the workshop/s], what was remembered, and changes in their life.*

(Maxwell & Roberson, 2001, p. 2)

An important consideration in the formulation of the evaluation strategy was to avoid intruding upon the dynamics of the workshops such as encountered in Curreen’s (1994) study.

The first step undertaken was to examine existing data routinely collected by the AVP regions.

Following the conclusion of AVP workshops, facilitators routinely collect written feedback. This was regarded as a valuable source of information that should be included in the appraisal of AVP. Additionally, this information would be useful for the development of a national survey questionnaire.

In one form or another, end-of-workshop evaluations (see Appendix C) have been conducted since the inception of AVPA (M. Geise, personal communication, June 2001). This form collects some basic demographic information and asks some questions about the person’s response to the workshop. These are then usually summarised by the Team Leader to provide feedback to the facilitating team and forwarded to the National Coordinator. Although the forms have changed over the years, a basic structure has remained sufficiently consistent for comparison.

The end-of-workshop evaluations serve as a useful initial source of information about workshop participants’ impressions and understandings of the experience. As these forms are completed immediately upon the conclusion of the workshop they evaluate the **impact** of the workshop.

### End-of-workshop evaluations

A sample of 81 end-of-workshop evaluations was obtained from those held by the National Coordinator. Forms were sampled from each

Table 3 Demographics of end-of-workshop evaluation sample.

	Prison	Community	Total
<b>Sex</b>			
Men	20	12	22
Women	11	13	24
Not stated	12	13	25
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>81</i>
<b>Workshop level</b>			
Basic	27	26	53
Advanced	14	7	21
T4F	2	4	6
Not stated	0	1	1

level of workshop in each region across the years 1996 to 2001 and included both prison and community-based workshops. The results of this process are set out in Table 3 above.

Table 3 above shows that the sample consisted of 32 (39.5%) men and 23 (28.4%) women, and a further 26 (32.1%) who did not state their sex. Of

Table 4 Themes derived from the workshop evaluations.

Recurrent themes <sup>†</sup>	Frequency of text units	Percent of total
Affirming	25	4.6%
Change	197	36.1%
Choice	36	6.6%
Communicating	129	23.6%
Negative response	36	6.6%
Non-specific approval	187	34.2%
Respecting	18	3.3%
Trust	27	5.0%
Unmet needs	12	2.2%
Violence	24	4.4%

Note: † As some responses are coded under several codes, the total adds up to greater than 100%.

these, 43 (53.1%) were prison inmates. A further 38 (46.9%) were from participants of community-based workshops. Although all regions were represented in the sample, the distribution was variable. The greatest representation of participants was from Auckland (n = 10) and Wellington (n = 11).

As expected, Table 3 shows that the workshop levels were dominated by evaluations from the Basic Workshop (n = 53), while there were very few from the Training-for-Facilitators (T4F) Workshops. This is a reflection of the difference in numbers of people that attend the two workshops; the Basic Workshop being the most commonly run workshop.

#### Analysis

The written responses to the evaluation questions from the sample were entered into a database in a qualitative research computer programme N4 (Qualitative Solutions & Research, 1997) and then analysed using a coding process. This involved examining each response entered from the evaluation forms and giving a code label (or a number of labels) that described the meanings, topics, or ideas expressed or implied in their answers. Once coding was completed, the coding itself was then examined for broader commonalities or themes. In this way the coding became summarised into ten identifiable themes and given the labels shown in Table 4 below. Coding that disagreed with the emerging positive trend was also included as a form of qualitative double-checking (Guba, cited in Patton, 1987). These codes were included under the code labels of **negative response** and **unmet needs**.

The number of instances where each of the ten themes occurred was tallied and is shown in Table 4 above. Responses that were left blank or

not coded (e.g. unreadable response) are not included in the table.

The ten themes are defined as follows.

Theme that were most frequently mentioned were that of changing, communicating, and non-specific approval. Noting a positive change in behaviour or attitude or understanding in oneself (or others) was grouped under the theme of **changing**. For example: *“break through”* or *“allowing the process to continue despite resentment and experiencing it like a birthing of self discovery. I let it happen”*.

The theme of **communicating** brought together any expression of the experience of sharing, togetherness, being able to talk about self or feelings, or simply just listening. For example: *“knowing that in order to grow you must drop your barriers. Since starting this course I have begun dreaming again,”* and *“the honesty and trust within the group enabled me to speak on matters which had been suppressed inside”*.

A large number of responses made positive comment about their AVP experience and either didn't specify any particular aspect (e.g. *“very pleased”*) or referred to the general milieu of the workshop, such as *“the cooking or how it was all organised”*. These comments were collected under the theme of **non-specific approval**.

Themes less frequently coded were that of **affirming, choice, trust, and respecting**.

The theme labelled **affirming** related to the experience of building confidence and receipt of positive comment such as: *“I feel more confident and really good about myself”*. The

theme of **choice** grouped together any mention of ideas about choosing, or alternatives, such as: *“learning that you can deal with violence in a number of ways”*.

Statements coded under the theme of **trust** included: *“being able to open up. To share honestly”*. Less explicit statements were also coded as trust if there was an implied awareness of permitting reliance, or developing confidence in someone else, or even trusting in themselves. The theme of **respecting** also included respect for self as well as respect for others. For example: *“the mandala created a space for me to recognise something I'd like to change about the way I respect myself in the future”* and, *“accepting who I am and recognising my achievements”*.

In their responses, a number of participants made direct reference to **violence**. All the comments referred to some change in their perspective on violence. Some referred to their perpetration of violence, such as:

*I have lived a life of violence. Now it has become like a poison that is slowly killing the inner me. I now have a desire to change and grow. I have a want of inner peace.*

Others referred to a change in their understanding of what constitutes violence: *“A realisation that some things I take for granted, others find violent and threatening”*.

Although the overwhelming trend of the responses in the evaluations was positive, there were a few comments that were critical or expressed an unfavourable experience. These were collectively brought together under the theme of **negative response**. This included comments such as: *“not being able to work on*

*certain issues once brought to the surface”, or “I was expecting specific tools. I didn’t have a real understanding of AVP and what the process is”. Other comments such as “I have covered all this and more in other workshops” and “too shallow for educated people”, suggest a mismatch between the actuality of the workshop experience and expectations about the workshop and the person’s own perceived needs. Other negative comments referred to organisational issues: for example, “people arriving late and interruptions from the guards and having our programme shortened”.*

The remaining theme of **unmet needs** groups together diverse feedback about aspects of participants’ experience that they feel needed improvement. These comments were numerically small, and include general comments such as “another couple of days would be great”, as well as comments requesting a “non religious element to the gathering, more games needed and one on one role plays”. Some of these issues are unique to the particular workshop attended while others perhaps point to a more systemic issue. A wider survey, such as that undertaken later in this evaluation will assist in clarifying these issues further.

The end-of-workshop evaluation forms also asked if participants would like to do another AVP workshop. In an overwhelmingly positive response, seventy four percent of prison inmates stated they would. Sixty percent of the community-based workshops also stated that they would. This is a highly positive response to the workshops, and of particular note, even more so from the prison-based workshops.

## Development of the national survey questionnaire

Following the preliminary sampling of the end-of-workshop evaluations shows themes similar to that of the study by Bitel and his colleagues, a national survey was developed.

Three sources of data informed the development of the survey questionnaire. In the first instance, the research brief prepared by Maxwell & Roberson (2001), discussed earlier, specified that the data be self-report and should include information on: the impact of the workshop/s, change in prosocial behaviour; and any violent and/or abusive behaviour. It additionally specified that both quantitative and qualitative data be collected. Second, the UK *Pilot Evaluation* by Bitel et al (1998) established 18 specific outcomes for AVP that may be used as a basis for evaluation. Given the substantial nature of the *Pilot Study*, these will be considered in the development of the survey questionnaire.

The issues raised in the end-of-workshop responses, discussed above, show what participants in Aotearoa/ New Zealand have found to be important for them in their workshop experiences. As only a finite number of questions can be included in any questionnaire, this information serves to assist in the prioritisation of the issues canvassed in the national survey.

### Questionnaire structure

The survey questionnaire (See Appendix D) has four major sections: information and instructions, demographics, quantitative data, and lastly a short series of open-ended questions.

The first section provides some basic information for respondents. The next section asks for basic demographic data about themselves and their



exposure to AVP. This permits a description of the characteristics of the sample. It also permits a breakdown of the results into groups that are seen to be pertinent to the aims of AVP.

The third section of the questionnaire seeks responses in the form of rating scales, with an option of adding a short comment. Questions were directed at seeking a response about the helpfulness of AVP to bring about some change. The questions were always phrased as a positive question, as piloting showed a mixture of positive and negative resulted in confusion. Similarly, the rating scales were consistent to reduce confusion.

The remaining section has six open-ended questions. The open-ended questions obtain information in a manner that preserves the unique personal context about the impact of doing AVP workshops. These questions sought information on the experience of personal change that past workshop participants attribute to AVP. The aim of this set of questions was not to obtain an objective reality as seen by *other* people, but to obtain information on personal change for which *participants themselves* perceive AVP has been pivotal.

Following the development of a draft survey questionnaire, the layout and wording was further refined through consultation with a small number of experienced AVP people and further refined again by a pilot survey with ten other people who had completed AVP workshops.

### Mail-out survey process

The objective of this survey has been to appraise AVP workshops through responses of past workshop participants. However, as signalled in the research brief (see Appendix B), a complete

list of workshop participants for AVP does not exist, nationally and regionally. An alternative method of establishing a list of past participants was therefore needed.

The sampling aim adopted for this study has been to obtain an adequate number of responses *characteristic* of the different groups of workshop participants. In consultation with experienced AVP people it was decided that the major sample groupings would be based upon the workshop levels (Basic, Advanced, T4F) for both prison and community-based workshops. The focus of sampling was therefore on these characteristics. A consensus was that a substantial amount of information about recruitment and follow-up of workshop participants was held within informal networks and by word-of-mouth.

After consultation at an AVPA National Executive meeting, the survey mail-out proceeded, drawing upon the local knowledge of key AVP people across the country. Each was supplied with a number of prepacked unaddressed envelopes containing a questionnaire and prepaid return-addressed envelope. They in turn, addressed and mailed these to recent workshop participants in their region. In addition to sending pre-packed envelopes to key people in each region, survey questionnaires were also included in the November 2001 distribution of the AVPA newsletter *Awhi*. A total of 417 survey questionnaires were distributed in this manner.

When deciding whom to target for the survey questionnaire mail-out, priority was given to the numerically smallest groups. This meant prioritising those who had completed Training-for-Facilitators Workshops, followed by those who had completed Advanced Workshops. ex-

inmates, and people referred to workshops by Probation & Parole were also given priority.

Although the above strategy proved to be effective, this approach would not access past workshop participants who were currently prison inmates. A separate strategy was required for this group. However, discussion with the Prison Service established that there was no effective way to distribute questionnaires to inmates as they are frequently moved, and also to those who were recently discharged (C. Hall, personal communication, November 2001). Although past participants of prison workshops were known by AVP people, current whereabouts of inmates could not be easily ascertained. Nonetheless, a total of 218 survey forms were mailed to the last known prison address via AVP people who had the most recent contact. Ultimately, this was not a very productive strategy.

## Ethical considerations

It has been a central concern that the fundamental principles of AVP were maintained in the conduct of this evaluation. In this regard, the principles of consultation, voluntarism, and privacy have been paramount in the implementation of this evaluation by maintaining a close liaison with experienced AVP people and, as outlined above, a wider consultation was held prior to the implementation of the survey. Second, participation in the survey is voluntary and separated from the conduct of any workshop. Thirdly, identifying information was not collected on the survey questionnaire. Therefore, survey responses were anonymous. Publication of results, such as this report, has been grouped to further ensure identification of participants is not possible. Survey questionnaires and electronic databases were destroyed at the time of the final draft of this publication.

# 5

## Survey results

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This chapter outlines the results of the mail-out survey of past AVP workshop participants. First the sample is described, then an analysis of the results is conducted in which both quantitative and qualitative results are described.

### Description of sample

Approximately<sup>6</sup> 635 survey questionnaires were distributed to past AVP workshop participants throughout New Zealand (see Table 5 below) in November 2001. This distribution occurred through the personal networks of individual key AVP people (see preceding chapter). Of these, 130 survey questionnaires were eventually 'returned to sender'. The bulk (91.5%) of those 'returned to sender' were marked as having come from prisons. This leaves a balance of 361 survey questionnaires lost, or else recipients chose not to respond. Of these, the vast majority (85%) were community addresses. The high rate of 'return to sender' from prison addresses is likely to be due to the movement of inmates

Table 5 Distribution of survey questionnaires.

	Community	Prison	Total
Number sent	417	218	635
Number "returned to sender"	11	119	130
Number unknown	307	54	361
Number completed	101	45	146

<sup>6</sup> This number is approximate as some aspects of distribution were not within the control of the researcher.

between prisons or having been released. It was not possible for this study to arrange for survey questionnaires to be forwarded on to inmates by the Prison Service. The high rate of community non-response is partly due to a duplication of addresses by inclusion of survey questionnaires in the AVPA newsletter *Awhi*. Undoubtedly survey questionnaires included in *Awhi* were also sent to AVP people who had already been sent questionnaires. Nonetheless, a total of 146 completed survey questionnaires were returned completed by February 2002. Of these, 45.2% (n = 66) were men and 51.4% (n = 75) were women. Five respondents did not identify their sex.

The results show that at the time respondents had completed their most recent workshop, 45 (30.8%) were prison inmates while a further 5 (3.4%) were either on probation (n = 1) or had been in prison (n = 4). Ninety-five (65.1%) reported that they had no connection with court or prison. One participant chose not to respond to the question.

In comparison to the end-of-workshop sample in the preceding chapter, the distribution by sex and prison/community status in this sample is different. There is a greater number of women in the survey sample compared to that of the earlier end-of-workshop sample, and included a significantly lower number of inmates. It seems likely that a high proportion of 'returned to sender' from prisons would account for a lower than

Table 6 Distribution according to ethnic identity.

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Number</b>
Maori	33 (22.6%)
Pakeha/European	96 (65.7%)
Other	23 (15.7%)
Pacific Islander	7 (4.8%)

Note: The percent total is greater than 100% as participants identified with more than one ethnic group.

expected number of inmates, as well as a lower proportion of men overall in the survey results.

The distribution across the various self-identified ethnic groups is shown in Table 6 above. Participants could, and did, identify with more than one ethnic group. The largest single ethnic group that participants identified with was Pakeha/European (65.7%), followed by Maori (22.6%). There were slightly more men who identified as Maori than did women (men = 13.0%, women = 8.9%). The reverse occurred for those who identified as Pakeha/European (men = 27.4%, women = 36.3%).

The age group of the sample is generally late middle age or older, falling mostly in the 41 to 60 years (44.5%) age range. A further 20.5% identified their age as being over 60 years. Almost a third (32.9%) identified themselves as being in the 20 to 40 year age group. The men

Table 7 Distribution of sample by level of AVP workshop.

<b>Workshop</b>	<b>Number<sup>††</sup></b>
Basic	142 (97.3%)
Advanced	98 (67.1%)
Training-for-Facilitators (T4F)	56 (38.4%)
Team Leader Training	22 (15.1%)
<i>Other Workshops<sup>†</sup></i>	<i>86 (58.9%)</i>

Notes: † Other workshops are italicised here to indicate that these workshops do not fit into a linear progression.

†† Total numbers are greater than 146 (100%) as participants have done more than one workshop.

predominated in the age groups up to 40 years (men = 22.6%, women = 11.0%), while women were the majority in the older age groups (men = 22.6%, women = 40.4%).

While almost the entire sample (97.3%) reported that they had completed the Basic Workshop the four respondents who did not, indicated that they had completed more Advanced Workshops. It is therefore likely that they had simply failed to indicate completion of the Basic Workshop, given that the Basic Workshop is a prerequisite. It can therefore be safely be assumed that 100% of the sample had completed the Basic Workshop.

A substantial portion of the sample have also completed more than the Basic Workshop (see Table 7 above). Two thirds had completed the Advanced Workshop, while a further third of these also report completing the Training-for-Facilitators (T4F) workshop. In total, more than two thirds (68.5%) of the respondents report completing **more** than the Basic Workshop.

Results also show that in addition to doing the first three workshops, 15.1% have also completed Team Leader training. More than a third (38.4%) of the responses also report having facilitated an AVP workshop. This may include being an 'apprentice' facilitator. While the Basic, Advanced, T4F, and Team Leader training<sup>7</sup> are undertaken in a linear progression, Other Workshops are open to facilitators to pursue further training.

It is significant that a high proportion of the sample have had a depth of exposure to AVP, as this indicates a greater familiarity and commitment to AVP ideas and processes than by participating in a Basic Workshop alone. Of itself, this level of participation indicates a high degree

<sup>7</sup> Although regarded as further training, Team Leader training is by invitation.

of positive regard for the workshops. This is consistent with the high number of workshop participants indicating a desire to do more workshops in the end-of-workshop evaluation sample in the preceding chapter.

## Survey findings

The findings detailed below overwhelmingly show that most respondents report that AVP workshops have been helpful. The open-ended responses show that the manner in which AVP workshops have been helpful are as diverse as the individual lives of the respondents.

### Did AVP workshops help?

The first seven questions of the survey questionnaire could be answered by indicating a response on a scale from 'always' to 'not at all', to questions asking did AVP help? Answers could be supplemented with a short clarifying statement. The final six questions were open-ended, requiring a descriptive response.

Figure 2 below shows the cumulative rating of helpfulness for each level of workshop. The y-axis (n) shows the total number of responses. clearly shows that a substantial portion of

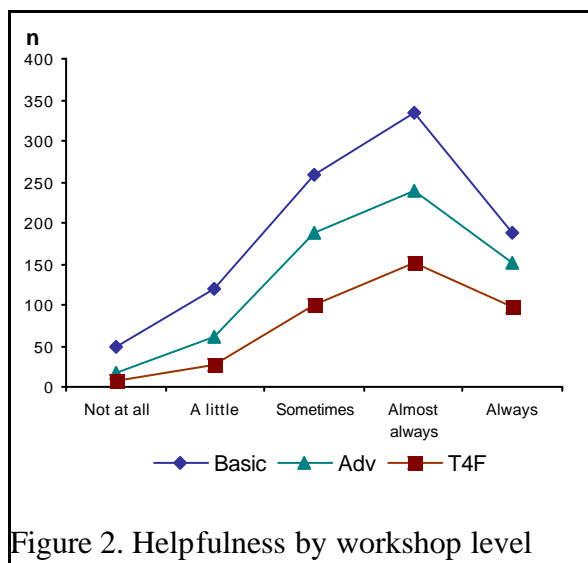


Figure 2. Helpfulness by workshop level

Note: Unstated responses = 77

responses rated the helpfulness of AVP workshops very highly. The peak of this graph is at the rating of 'almost always'. As can be seen in the analysis of each question below, this is a feature seen across all seven questions and a very positive result.

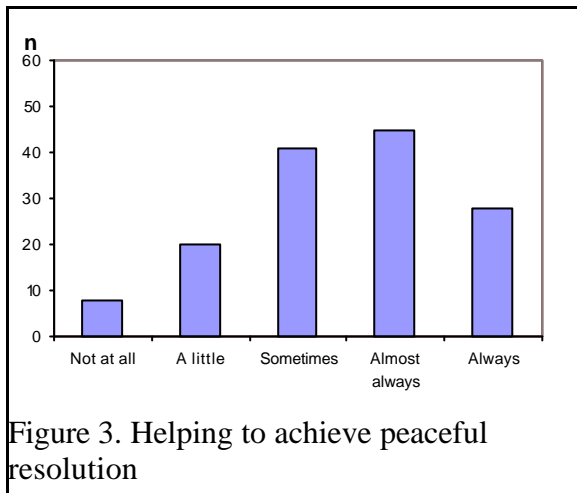
The responses to the first seven questions were entered into a database and then charted onto the bar graphs shown below. A feature of the total rating data is that the middle ranked response<sup>8</sup>, or average response, is 'almost always' helpful. Such consistently high rating across all the data demonstrates that respondents rate the degree of helpfulness from AVP workshops very highly.

The analysis of each question below shows that the comments accompanying respondents' ratings support the data shown in the graphs. While varying degrees of understanding about AVP principles have been achieved, in almost all cases, respondents report that the experience has helped or supported them in some way. The few responses that report AVP was not helpful at all generally state that this was because they did not see change as being needed, either because they had already learnt the material elsewhere, or because they didn't perceive a need in this area of their lives.

### Peaceful resolution of difficult issues

This question asked respondents to rate how well AVP workshops helped them to resolve difficult issues using peaceful means. Overall, responses to this question show that AVP workshops are reported as being very helpful for this issue. Figure 3 below, shows the frequency distribution of responses for this question. The vast majority (91.8%) of participants report that AVP

<sup>8</sup> This is also called the *median* value which is the middle value after arranging the data in rank order.



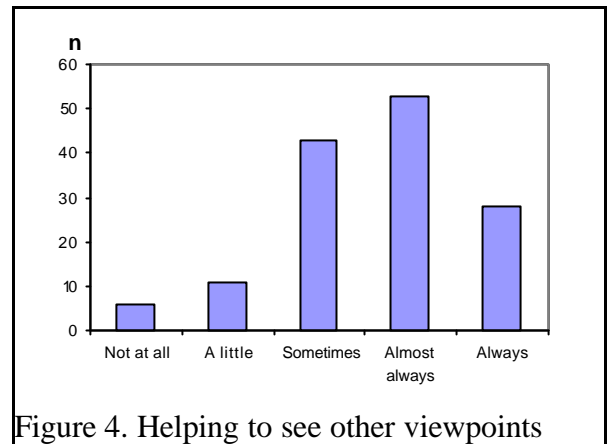
Note: Unstated responses = 4

workshops had helped them to develop peaceful resolution to conflict. Half (50%) of the responses to this question report that AVP workshops helped either 'always' or 'almost always', while 13.7% report that the workshops helped 'a little'. Only 5.5% reported that the workshops were 'not at all' helpful for achieving peaceful resolution to conflict.

Participants described the workshops as being helpful in a variety of ways. For example: *"I am getting better control of my temper and thinking about what's important. Thinking before acting"*. Other responses are more detailed, reporting the use of *"respect, tolerance, acceptance of other approaches, patience, attention"*. Yet others state that they have changed their view of people: *"I see more persons (including myself) as both vulnerable and loveable"* and being *"more open minded"*.

#### Seeing other people's viewpoint

Figure 4 below shows that AVP workshops are successful in helping participants to see other people's point of view. The vast majority (92.5%)



Note: Unstated responses = 5

of respondents found that AVP workshops have helped with this issue. Over half (55.5%) of the respondents found that the workshops 'almost always' or 'always' helped to see others' points of view, while 7.5% reported the workshops helped 'a little'. Only 4.1% reported that they didn't find the workshops at all helpful.

Respondents provided comment on a variety of means that had enabled them to see other people's point of view. For example, an inmate stated that he did this *"by appreciat[ing] that my view is not the only point of view"*. Other respondents found that AVP reinforced existing abilities, one stating that *"I think I could already do this before AVP but AVP helps"*.

#### Trusting others

This question asked respondents how well AVP workshops helped them to have a greater amount of trust in others. Figure 5 below shows that the vast majority (89.0%) of respondents report that AVP workshops were helpful for enabling trust in others. Slightly less than half (41.1%) of respondents found AVP workshops to be helpful 'almost always' or 'always', while 15.8% found the workshops helped 'a little'. Only 6.9% reported that the workshops did not help at all in enabling them to trust others.

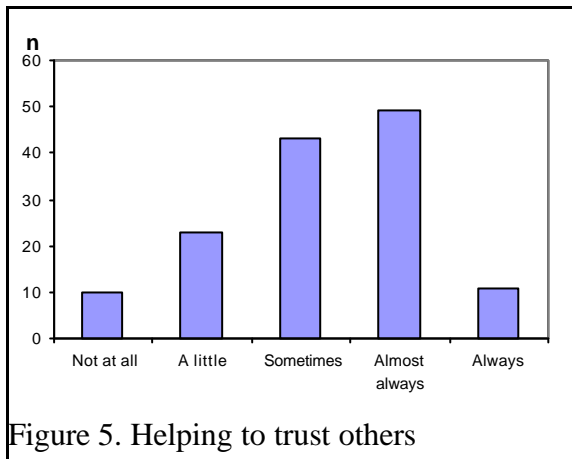


Figure 5. Helping to trust others

Note: Unstated responses = 6

The comments accompanying the responses to this question help explain the slightly lower overall rating compared to the other ratings, and reflect the challenges encountered with this issue. For instance, an inmate simply stated: *“hard to trust inmates!”*, while another inmate stated that *“I don’t trust anyone”*. While yet another stated that *“trust has to be earned first. From there who knows”*.

However, reflecting the general trend of the responses, another respondent states she is:

*Less bound up in what others do as reflecting badly on me, less self obsessive and more able to see goodness in difference too. I am no longer so afraid of others and so can be more trusting.*

#### More choices

Figure 6 below shows that the vast majority (91.1%) of respondents have found that AVP workshops have helped them to use more choices in resolving conflict. Nearly half (46.6%) of the respondents report that the workshops have been helpful ‘almost always’ or ‘always’, while 13.7% found them ‘a little’ helpful. Only 4.1% reported AVP workshops were ‘not at all’ helpful for revealing choices about conflict.

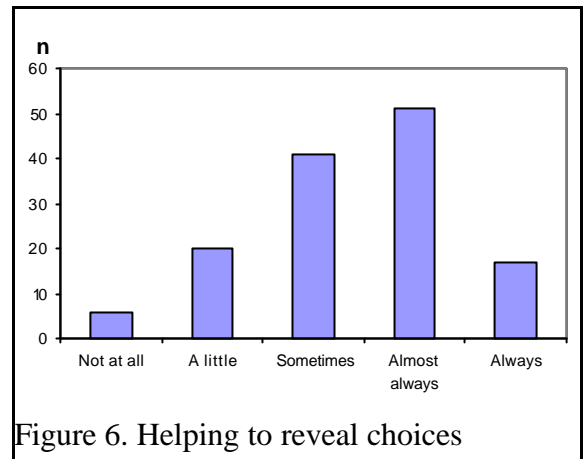


Figure 6. Helping to reveal choices

Note: Unstated responses = 7

Comments such as: *“letting it go till I cool off”*, *“refocusing on caring for self, respect for others”* and *“I think more often and make good choices”*, confirm that respondents have found AVP workshops very helpful for learning about choice. Some respondents mentioned the use of AVP concepts such as Transforming Power to enable them to find choices: *“Think before reacting. Caring for others. Expect the best. Transform [sic] power”*.

#### Self-respect

Figure 7 shows that AVP workshops are successful in assisting participants to feel greater respect for themselves. The vast majority (89.7%) of respondents report that AVP

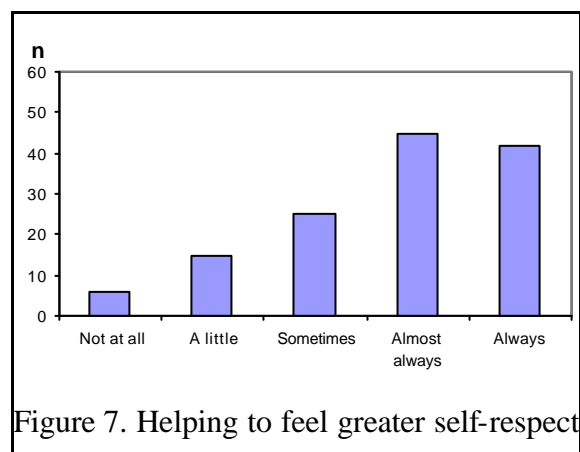


Figure 7. Helping to feel greater self-respect

Note: Unstated responses = 9

workshops have helped them to attain greater self-respect. More than half (59.6%) of respondents report AVP workshops to be helpful on this issue either 'always' or 'almost always', while 10.3% report the workshops have helped 'a little'. Only 4.1% reported that they were helped 'not at all'.

Respondents report that AVP workshops have been helpful in various ways. One respondent stated that this was achieved through AVP *“offering me a supportive environment in which to take on greater challenges”* while another states that *“I realise I was a victim of myself and that I have forgiven everyone but myself”*. Another respondent who reported that AVP helped 'almost always' to feel greater self-respect stated that this was through: *“making me realise I’m not a bad person, but that I’m capable of bad acts and can be responsible for myself”*.

#### Greater responsibility

Figure 8 below shows that respondents report AVP workshops are very successful at helping them to take greater responsibility for their behaviours towards others. Most respondents

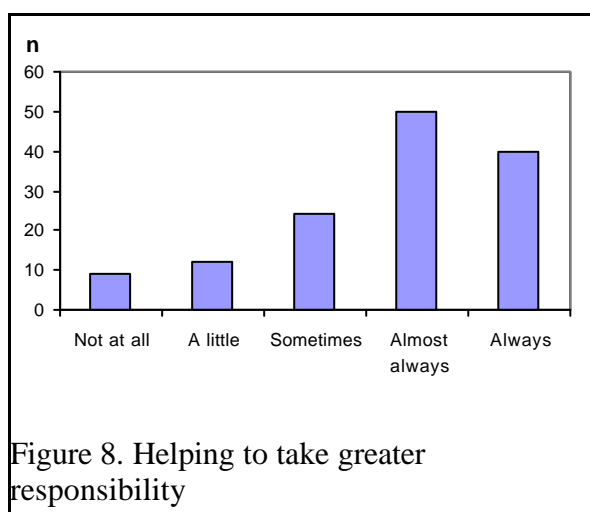


Figure 8. Helping to take greater responsibility

Note: Unstated responses = 7

(89.0%) report that AVP workshops have been helpful. Almost two thirds (61.6%) of respondents reported that they 'always' or 'almost always' take greater responsibility for their behaviour toward others, while 8.2% reported the workshops to be 'a little' helpful. Only 6.2% reported them to be 'not at all' helpful.

Although some respondents reported prior understanding of this issue, they have also stated that AVP workshops have extended their knowledge, such as in the following statement:

*Again I knew this before AVP. However, AVP has shown me more about how I behave towards others. Since I seek to be good, I am more responsible.*

Yet others referred to a change in perception of where responsibility lay, such as by: *“recognising it is not fair to hurt others because I feel down. Trying to own my problems”*.

#### Understanding of feelings and actions

Figure 9 below shows that respondents report that AVP workshops have been very successful (90.4%) at helping participants have a greater understanding of their feelings and actions. Nearly half (45.2%) of the respondents reported that AVP workshops were helpful in achieving

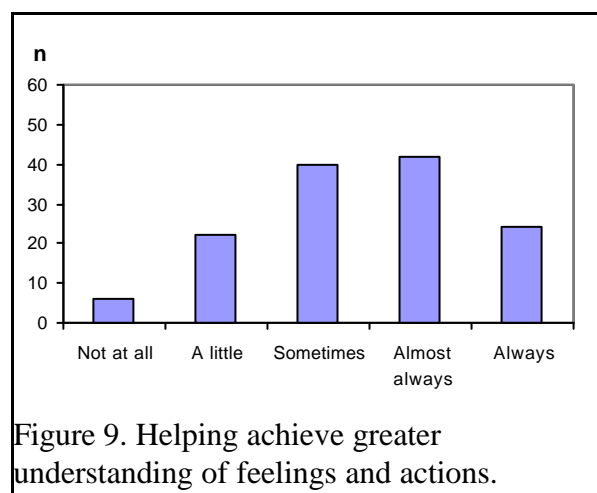


Figure 9. Helping achieve greater understanding of feelings and actions.

Note: Unstated responses = 8



greater understanding of their feelings and actions, while 15.1% reported the workshops helped 'a little'. Only 4.1% reported that the workshops were 'not at all' helpful for this issue.

Respondents report that change has occurred in many and varied ways. While some comments simply report: *"more conscious of my feelings"*, others report more specific changes: *"I can express myself now"* or, *"it's made me think"*. Yet others have reported significant changes in different directions, for example: *"I now have more skills in being able to name feelings and act on them"*, and *"I'm more tolerant and less verbally and physically violent"*.

Although there were a small number of respondents reporting that AVP workshops did not help them at all for this issue, many of these responses appeared to rate the helpfulness of AVP workshops low because this issue was not perceived as needed, rather than as an adverse evaluation of AVP workshops. For instance, one respondent stated *"considering that I understand myself better than the next person, to me it is commonsense"*, while another reported that *"my feelings themselves changed, not so much the understanding of them"*.

### Open-ended responses

The final six questions of the survey questionnaire sought open-ended responses on the changes to various aspects of people's lives that they have attributed to AVP workshops. The responses provide a wide and varying picture of the ways in which people have been influenced by their AVP workshop experience. Such

information cannot be captured in numerical summaries alone and is a of the inclusion of a qualitative dimension to this study.

### Change to personal relationships

This question sought an open-ended response about the way in which personal relationships had changed as a result of participating in AVP workshops.

Many responses to this question described improvements in various attributes of relating to others, such as tolerance, for example: *"I am much more unconditional in my acceptance of others"*, and different aspects of communicating, such as talking about emotions: *"encouraged me to be more open, especially about my emotions"*. Many respondents also mentioned the idea of openness, for example: *"openness and sharing and finding a sense of commonality"*. Responses also appeared to show that there was improved self-esteem and self-worth. For example, *"it has helped change my fears and lack of self-esteem and more accepting of myself and therefore others"*. Yet others mentioned experiencing a connection or sense of community as being helpful:

*By providing a safe zone I gained confidence to be more open and honest of my feelings. I gained more understanding empathy from other people.*

A number of respondents mentioned specific changes that were noted by others, such as changed family relationships or comments from partners or children:

*I get on with my parents a lot better. They can see the change. Also my [child] thinks I'm a good [parent] and [partner] thinks so too.*

The examples above clearly demonstrate the depth and variety of ways in which respondents have drawn upon their experience of the workshops to bring about change in their relationships.

#### Usefulness for living

This question sought an open-ended response about what was the most useful aspect of the AVP workshops for living. Overwhelmingly, respondents referred to various aspects of community: *“being part of a community and the skills I have learnt”*. Some referred to networks, meeting others, making friends, bonding, sharing group activities that were fun. There was a sense of being accepted, safety, and joy in many of these responses. Some respondents expressed a sense of surprise and pleasure at this experience. For some, such an experience was new. For example, the following respondent stated that:

*I found the whole lot very interesting because I've never experienced anything like this before and it has helped me a lot in my life but I do relapse now and then.*

Additionally, many of the responses to this question referred to communication. Some specified particular skills, such as listening and provision of feedback, and *“the TP wheel”*. While others referred to changes in dealing with their feelings: *“being able to deal with my anger in a manner that wouldn't hurt myself or others”*. Many respondents also found their experience was one in which they encountered respectfulness: *“the respect and friendship I received from other people”*. This was from people that were strangers before commencement of the workshop. Respectfulness was experienced in a variety of ways: respect for

self; respect for others; and being shown respect – simply because they existed.

These examples clearly demonstrate the value that respondents placed on the learning they obtained from their AVP workshop experience.

#### Change in approach to conflict

This question sought an open-ended response about the way in which changes in respondents' approach to situations of conflict have occurred. As before, there is not a singular outstanding approach identified by respondents, but instead, respondents have identified a variety of aspects of AVP they have drawn upon to make change.

As in the previous question, many respondents referred to a sense of community in their response and mostly wrote about tolerance, openness and communication. For example, *“[I] understand and listen to where other people are coming from”*, while another person wrote that *“I now look for common ground when my views oppose”*.

Many respondents referred to various aspects of communicating. As in previous responses to survey questions, many referred to specific skills they had learnt, such as *“I' statements and talking things through”*. Others said they now implement improved listening skills. A number of respondents referred to specific AVP tools such as the *“TP wheel”* and *“mandala”*. Respondents also made specific comment on how AVP workshops have changed their approach to conflict:

*I'm probably generally calmer. I am less reactive when “stuff” starts to happen. I'm more able to relate the effectiveness of the tools to conflict. If things get really heavy I eventually find my way back to the tools.*

Many others mentioned having choices; even the choice of simply walking away or somehow avoiding the conflict.

An unexpected response from several respondents were comments of now being “*less fearful*”, and that this realisation had changed their approach to conflict. For example: “*not afraid as much as formerly*”, and “*not quite so frightened, more able to sail in*”. Unfortunately the structure of the questionnaire was not designed to explore this further.

Four respondents stated that AVP workshops did not help them to change their approach to conflict. However, of these, three said they had done similar workshops elsewhere.

Clearly, these examples show that most respondents were able to integrate the workshop experiences into their particular life circumstances in an effort to more peacefully manage conflict.

#### Applying AVP in prison

This question sought an open-ended response about what way AVP helped while in prison. Of the 146 responses to the survey, forty-nine respondents indicated they were either inmates or ex-inmates at the time of their last AVP workshop.

Overall, the greatest benefit reported by respondents to this question appears to be obtaining or improving on various interpersonal skills, particularly that of listening. Respondents stated that they gained in a variety of ways, such as: “*listening, empathy, sharing, confidence, humour, caring, owning my stuff, appropriate language*”.

Several inmates reported that, while acknowledging it was difficult, they also identified that AVP workshops have helped them in dealing with conflict. For example, “*It is difficult but things that get to me or people I stay away from them but I am not as violent as I used to be*”, and “*pretty hard, can be easy, depends on situation, time your serving, crime you’ve done and people you hang with*”.

Some found that AVP workshops seemed to be more applicable for their return to the community:

*Not so much applying but learning the skills before release into the community. This place is near impossible to apply AVP kaupapa. Believe me it is a challenge for everyone inside.*

Of the 26 written responses to this question, only three stated that it had not helped them at all clearly showing that, albeit a challenge to apply, inmate-respondents valued what they learnt from their AVP workshop experience.

#### Returning to the community

This question sought open-ended responses about the usefulness of AVP workshops for inmates returning to the community. Although there were many responses, only four of these also identified themselves as ex-inmates. Many of the other respondents stated they were either still in prison, or had facilitated workshops in prisons.

The four ex-inmate respondents referred to decisions to take time-out, think first, and “*not mental out about other’s judgements*”.

Unfortunately, the small numbers of ex-inmates responding to this question means that a more detailed description of responses to AVP workshops is not possible for this question.

## Additional comments

Many and varied remarks were made in response to the invitation to add further comments. Although difficult to summarise such diversity, the comments below seek to capture general trends and significant isolated critique that respond directly to AVP aims and philosophy.

Many respondents simply expressed their thanks and stated how highly they valued AVP:

*To meet with people on the same wavelength re anti-violence, in itself is supportive and AVP experiences are inspiring. AVP is not a programme – it is a lifestyle. I have suggested it's kaupapa since it first came to Aotearoa and will continue to do so. Heoi ario. Kia ora.*

Others expressed regret and deep disappointment about AVP apparently no longer being available in prisons.

*I find that no longer having AVP in this prison a great loss. It may not have helped everyone but the ones who reached out and took the retools [sic] are every bit as important as those that didn't. I feel quite frustrated that AVP is no longer able to be part of prison rehabilitation. A very shortsighted viewpoint by the prison powers that be. Thank you AVP.*

Some other inmates appeared unaware of this change by the Prison Service and asked when the next workshops were being run.

A few respondents offered a critique of AVP based on their experience and observations. These appeared to run counter to the vast majority of responses and there appears to be no discernable common thread to the issues.

One respondent critiqued the quality of a workshop stating that *“it seemed too fuzzy and idealistic, not confrontational enough, facilitators are not up to AVP standards as*

*they get aggressive at times”*. Another his inmate circumstances in relation to AVP:

*Being transferred around the country doesn't help with no follow-up programmes which helps by giving refresher updates. I would like to get back to a jail that has follow-up programmes.*

Others expressed surprise at the changes they have made in their lives, which they attributed to their experience.

Another expressed doubt at the ability of *“one-off workshops”* to bring about lasting change. The respondent seemed unaware that there are a series of workshops that could be undertaken. Two other comments criticised the *“inflated”* claims about AVP that they had heard. On the other hand many respondents have also contradicted this opinion by specifically naming the changes in their lives that had been established for many years following their workshop (or workshops) experience.

Yet other comments are valuable for provoking debate about critical issues and the subtleties about anger and violence. An example is:

*Have significant doubts about whether AVP is a helpful context for women who have been traumatised by abuse. By and large for healing they need to learn anger and refusal to forgive (yet again) in order to move to a healthy life.*

Other comments that offered a critique, such as one already quoted above, mentioned a contradiction between AVP philosophy and what facilitators role-modelled saying that they found some to be aggressive.

## General themes from written responses

As well as the question-by-question analysis above, written responses were collectively

subjected to a qualitative analysis using the same process as described in the previous chapter (see p. 14). This analysis revealed a number of general trends, ideas, or themes that emerged from a collective reading of the responses. Although all comments were made by respondents in the context of the specific question, these general themes could be observed by the tendency of respondents to consistently draw on a specific set of ideas in their explanations. The results of this further analysis shows the major concepts respondents have reported they draw upon in their attempts to live without violence.

Briefly, these themes were identified as follows:

- Community; a sense of community, togetherness, sharing, belonging or being included.
- Confidence; belief in self and/or abilities.
- Clarity; experience of increased understanding or revelation.
- Enhanced skills and/or knowledge; acquisition of new ideas and ways of behaving, trying out

new ideas and behaviour.

- Communicating; skills or ideas that enhance communicating and/or being with others, talking.
- Trust; intimacy, safety, or a change from lack of trust such as fearfulness.
- Responsibility and/or ownership; taking responsibility and or owning his or her own actions.
- Self-esteem and or self-worth; comments about change to self-esteem and/or worth.
- Respectfulness; reference in comments to being respected, experiencing respect, or showing respect.

An important aspect of any workshop is that the material is easily generalised beyond the workshop setting. The presence of these themes identified above throughout all responses suggests that workshop concepts, ideas and experiences are applied to the everyday lives of workshop participants beyond the workshop setting.

# 6

## Discussion and recommendations

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The aim of this study was to appraise the effectiveness of AVP workshops in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This has been achieved by an analysis of routine end-of-workshop evaluation forms followed by a national survey of past AVP workshop participants.

### Discussion

A sample of 81 end-of-workshop evaluation forms was analysed. The analysis was indicative of a broadly positive response to AVP workshops. Additionally, three themes appeared to be prominent: change, communicating and non-specific approval. This result appeared to be consistent with the small published literature on AVP. The analysis of these forms was an evaluation of the *immediate* impact of AVP workshops, it also formed part of the development of the survey questionnaire used to appraise longer standing outcomes of AVP workshops.

In a variation to the method proposed in the research brief the mail-out of survey questionnaires occurred through key AVP people, rather than a sampling frame using AVP records. Checking the accuracy of addresses by the researcher therefore did not occur. Nonetheless, the resultant method was a largely successful strategy at obtaining responses from the major groups who have participated in AVP workshops. A weakness however, was an inability to forward mail to current prison inmates

who had also participated in AVP workshops. This was an unfortunate outcome, given that AVP workshops were developed from a need identified by inmates themselves (Bitel & Edgar, 1998; Garver & Reitan, 1995).

A further issue was the lack of success in obtaining responses from past workshop participants who were under Probation and Parole, or other court order, at the time of their last workshop. It would be useful for any future evaluation to address this weakness in the evaluation.

Nonetheless, a total of 146 survey responses from a broad group of past AVP workshop participants were analysed. The sample included representation from each of the three major workshop levels, a range of age groups, and an approximately even spread between women and men. Additionally, there was representation from respondents who identified as Maori, Pacific Island, and/or Pakeha/European. However, having only seven Pacific Island people in this survey is a weakness of this sample.

The major finding of this evaluation study is that 94% of AVP workshop participants reported that their workshop experience has helped them to take steps toward living peacefully. A consistent feature of the results for each question requesting a rating was that the median (or middle ranked) response for helpfulness is 'almost always'. This was also true when these

questions were analysed on the basis of workshop level (see Figure 2, p. 21). These findings demonstrate a consistently positive response across the numerical data of each of the issues explored in the survey questionnaire, namely helping with: resolving difficult issues, recognising other's viewpoints, trusting others, perceiving more choices, greater self-respect, greater responsibility, and understanding of feelings and actions. This highly positive response is supported by the comments accompanying each of the questions. These demonstrate that respondents successfully integrate AVP workshop experiential learning into their everyday lives in such a way as to have a positive impact on these issues.

Although less easily summarised than the numerical data, the open-ended responses are of significance. A collective reading of these responses shows the complexity and depth to which people have used their workshop experiences. Respondents clearly described significant changes to: personal relationships, usefulness for their life, and changes in their management of conflict.

Although descriptions contained in these written responses are idiosyncratic, they very clearly show the importance respondents have placed on **experience** as a way of **understanding** how to act and find alternatives to violence. This clearly supports the value that AVP workshops have placed on this mode of learning.

Written responses also show that the workshops pose a particularly difficult challenge for some participants. This appeared to be especially so, but not exclusively, for those in the institutional environment of prison. Nonetheless, responses show that the AVP workshop experience, at the least, appeared to provoke a questioning of

violence. The results show that the word "difficult" appeared many times within these respondents' commentaries.

There were also a small number (5.4%) of responses reporting that AVP workshops were 'not at all' helpful. However, this should not be interpreted as a solely negative opinion of AVP as much of this data was clarified further by the accompanying comments stating that the negative response is because either: they felt that they already knew the material, or felt that the workshops covered material they didn't need.

As with all research, this evaluation has limits as to what it can address and inform. Having said that, there are indications that these results may not be unusual. Though the end-of-workshop evaluations analysed earlier in Chapter 4 were obtained immediately after completing a workshop, they point to the same characteristically complex, idiosyncratic and positive, responses that appeared later in the survey. Further support for this view can be derived from a comparison of this current study to others reviewed from the published literature, earlier in Chapter 3. For instance, Curren (1994) observed that there were positive changes in both communication and "attitude". Likewise, Watt (1998) noted that openness, sharing, and conflict resolution were frequently cited strengths in participant self-reports. In the study by Joy (1995), she noted that there were significant positive shifts in attitude and conflict, and in particular, positive changes in the use of language. The results of this study are consistent with each of these observations.

Further, the results from this evaluation are consistent with those of Bitel and his colleagues (1998). All ten of the prioritised outcomes that

Bitel et al. evaluated in their study were found to be achieved, with only one outcome rated as a low degree of success. In this current study, similar key concepts were evaluated and found to be consistently achieved. Both studies used self-report data. However, a significant advance with the current evaluation is that it evaluated all workshop levels whereas Bitel et al. (1998) sampled participants of a Basic Workshops held in prisons.

Based on their theoretical model (see Figure 1, on p. 11), Bitel et al. (1998) concluded that further work was needed within AVP workshops to establish an understanding of choices leading to a greater acceptance of responsibility. The results of this current evaluation show further advancement in this area than did the sample in the UK *Pilot Study* (Bitel et al., 1998). It is possible that this is due the current sample including a high proportion of participants who had completed higher workshop levels and therefore having greater depth of experience with the issues.

On the basis of Bitel's (1999) theoretical model (see Figure 1, p. 11) the results of this evaluation supports the view that AVP workshops have the potential to make considerable impact on issues that are hypothesised as criminogenic background factors. Analysis of written responses showing themes such as respectfulness, building community, and responsibility for behaviour demonstrates that AVP workshops would seem to aptly suit a programme that facilitates inmates returning to the community. A number of inmate-respondents have themselves, stated this idea. Additionally, as this study demonstrates that AVP workshops enhance a sense of community, respectfulness, and trust, and facilitate an ability to take responsibility, there is potential that AVP

workshops would be useful as an adjunct to programmes that are aimed at combating violence. This was also a recommendation made in Curreen's 1994 study.

A feature of the analysis of the survey returns is that more than two thirds have completed more than the Basic Workshop. Although it would be expected that those who have attended the more advanced workshops would respond more favourably, on the basis of a greater understanding of the material, it must be remembered that they also **chose** to make the commitment to attend. Suggesting the favourable disposition existed before doing the Advanced Workshop. As there is a considerable commitment of time and energy to attend the higher-level workshops, the expected benefit would have been substantial. The numbers attending higher level workshops simply of itself is indicative of the high regard held for AVP workshops by those who have participated.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The evaluation undertaken in this study was substantially successful in achieving the aims and objectives set out in the research brief by Maxwell & Roberson (2001). The evaluation successfully achieved a larger scale evaluation than those previously undertaken and included the full range of workshops conducted by AVP, both in prison and in the community. However, a weakness of the sampling method was the low numbers of people identifying as ex-inmates, and also those under probation or other court order.

The results of this study show that AVP workshops are impacting on individual lives in such a way as to contribute toward meeting the goals and objectives of AVP set out in Table 2



(p. 4). Additionally, open-ended responses clearly show that people are being empowered to make use of the choices that they open up through the experiential learning process used in the workshops.

A number of recommendations arise out of the results and discussion above. The following recommendations are offered.

The most striking recommendation from the substantial response that reports AVP workshops to be helpful has to be that AVP workshops continue to be made available to as wide a group of people as is feasible for those prisons where it has ceased or has not been offered.

Given the consistent comments from inmates reporting AVP workshops to be of value, and explicit requests for AVP workshops to be run in prisons, a further recommendation is that a return of prison-based AVP workshops be pursued.

Although these results show that AVP workshops are substantially and consistently helpful, a couple of specific areas were rated slightly lower. On this basis, it is recommended that there be a greater focus in workshops on development of trust and development of an understanding of feelings and relationship to actions. This should enhance workshop outcomes in these areas.

Some respondents' comments report that application of workshop ideas was "difficult" in their particular circumstances. These seemed to be generally, but not exclusively, related to a prison context. Responses in this survey were not of sufficient detail to analyse the specifics of this issue. It is recommended that this issue be

followed-up through end-of-workshop feedback in order to develop specific focus points for workshops. Alternatively, it may be possible to explore this issue within the process of prison-based AVP workshops.

Although representing a very small number of respondents, a couple of adverse comments were made. This appeared to be in relation to specific workshop experiences rather than a general trend or theme. Nonetheless, greater detail would be informative to facilitate further improvement of the quality of AVP workshops. To enable this, it is recommended that AVP redesign the end-of-workshop evaluation form (see Appendix C) to ask directly and specifically about the nature of any issue that they found problematic, and how it has impacted on them. End-of-workshop forms would need to be made anonymous.

This feedback would also need to be sought separately from seeking expressions of interest from participants who want to undertake further workshops. This could be done via a separate process.

So that AVP can make the necessary changes on the basis of feedback from the end-of-workshop evaluation forms, it is further recommended that a process be developed that will ensure comment on problematic issues are appropriately reviewed and addressed.

A logical step following any evaluation study is to pursue a follow-up evaluation at some time in the future to: 1) address weaknesses in the initial study, and 2) to evaluate changes instituted as a result of the initial evaluation. If this is to be pursued, suitable funding sources will need to be investigated.

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# Appendices

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Appendix A : Approval to conduct study	36
Appendix B : Research brief	37
Appendix C : End-of-workshop evaluation form	41
Appendix D : Survey questionnaire	43

## Appendix A : Approval to conduct study

Page 1 of 1

**Brian Phillips**

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**From:** National Coordinator [avpa@clear.net.nz]  
**Sent:** Monday, 26 March 2001 22:18  
**To:** Brian Phillips  
**Subject:** AVP Survey  
**Follow Up Flag:** Reply  
**Due By:** Wednesday, 28 March 2001 17:00  
**Flag Status:** Completed

Kia ora Brian,

You may have already gathered from Myra that the Nat. Exec. Committee overwhelmingly agreed to you conducting the AVP Survey. It also agreed to the budget you submitted.

The following Minute was recorded:

**Research**

***We agree that we will go ahead with the proposal for research and approve the appointment of Brian Phillips to do the study as per his letter of March 6, 2001, including permission to publish an article in a appropriate journal, following the study.***

Thank you for your willingness, time & energy Brian. Best wishes with this task. Me and or Myra will keep in contact with you.

Kind regards

Dan Cook  
National Co-ordinator

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2/02/2002

## Appendix B : Research brief

### Evaluating the Alternatives to Violence Project

#### Introduction

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) is an international multi-cultural and voluntary Quaker initiative that conducts a series of workshops called "Creating Peaceful Pathways" that aim to help people create healthy relationships and peaceful communities. Quaker philosophy is one of non-violent belief and practices and speaking out against violence in all its forms to humanity and our environment. Consistent with this philosophy, AVP believe that a life lived with dignity and self-respect, and the opportunity for self-actualization, is the birthright of every person. Members of AVP believe that only when this birthright is made real, for all of us, we will have a just and peaceful world.

AVP started in Greenhaven Prison, New York, U.S.A. in 1975. Since then, AVP has spread to more than twenty-four countries including Canada, South America, England, Russia, Bosnia, India, Africa, Australia, Tonga. A study of 39 inmates in three different prisons conducted in England (Bitel et al 1998), concluded that AVP was effective in helping participants gain new insights and develop new skills which they used in their own lives.

In New Zealand, the Alternatives to Violence Project is a voluntary, non-profit organisation with charitable status from the Inland Revenue Dept. The goals of the project in New Zealand are to:

- offer creative conflict resolution workshops in prisons, communities, marae and high schools throughout Aotearoa
- ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to be equipped and empowered to make non-violent choices in their lives;
- encourage the philosophy of creating peaceful pathways based on an attitude of respect, trust and caring for others.

Additional information on AVP workshops in prisons and in the community is appended.

#### The development of AVP in Aotearoa New Zealand

The Alternatives to Violence Project was first introduced to Aotearoa (NZ) in October 1991. The very first workshop in the community coincided with a visit from New York by a Quaker by the name of Stephen Angell. From 1992 onwards, AVP expanded into NZ communities and prisons. Since its inception into prisons, AVP Programmes have run courses in the following regional prisons: Auckland West, Mt Eden (Auckland), Waikeria (Waikato), Rangipo (Turangi), Mangaroa (Hastings), Rimutaka, Mt Crawford & Arohata Women's prison (Wellington), Christchurch Women's prison (Christchurch).

AVP Aotearoa is made up of six (6) regions, they are as follows: Auckland, Waikato, Taumaranui, Hawkes Bay, Wellington & the Top of the South Island – Blenheim. Each of these regions has a co-ordinator that works in close liaison with the National Co-ordinator who holds the overview of all the regions combined.

At present, there are over one hundred (100) trained voluntary facilitators and team leaders. In addition, there are active inmate facilitators as well. There are approximately the same amount of people that help to cook, clean and transport participants in community workshops throughout Aotearoa.

Since October 1991, about 1100 people from the community have attended courses and courses have been attended by about 500 people in prisons. There is much anecdotal evidence of the success of AVP in helping those who have attended to change their lives and make a commitment to a non-violent future. The first evaluation in New Zealand (Curren, 1993) reported on changes in 15 participants in an Auckland prisons and reported enhanced communication skills, improved self expression, reduced anger, increased knowledge of alternatives to anger and greater awareness of others perspectives. In 1998 a Masters thesis (Watt, 1998) examined the progress of 56 people in three Auckland prisons but failed to demonstrate significant difference in attitudes and behaviour from pre to post test in questionnaires although the programme received positive feedback from prison staff, facilitators and programme participants.

These two studies are relatively small, limited in their focus and produce conflicting results. It is therefore proposed that a larger scale evaluation be conducted that brings together information from a variety of sources on the entire range of programmes, both within prisons and within the community, in order to inform users and providers of the effectiveness of current strategies and potential changes for the future.

The remainder of this proposal sets out objectives, and methods for an evaluation of the AVP workshops in New Zealand which, in the main, builds on material already collected through evaluations conducted by the programme facilitators during the course of the workshops that have been conducted.

#### **Objective**

To undertake an appraisal of the effectiveness of the work done by AVP workshops

Ideally, this is to be assessed by means of both quantitative and qualitative data from both community and prison graduates at the time of the workshops as well as after the workshops and will include:

- self report of violent and abusive behaviours;
- self report of pro-social behaviour, perceived personal safety and trust, tolerance, openness and personal relationships, self-esteem and wellbeing;
- self report data from a sample of graduates to determine what the impact, what was remembered, and changes in their life.

#### **Method**

There will be two main aspects to the methodology:

1. An analysis of the themes that emerge from the evaluations completed by:

- a. Basic, advanced, facilitator and team leader community workshop participants and
- b. Basic and advanced and facilitator prison workshop participants.

The numbers of participants in each workshop category mentioning each theme will be counted and illustrative comments will be selected.

2. Questionnaires will be sent out by post to a sample of workshop participants selected randomly from each year and each type of workshop from AVP files that record names and addresses of participants. The size of the sample will be determined depending on the budget and the numbers of records of various types that prove to be available. A problem with this method of follow up is that many may have moved and those most transient may include those who were least responsive. Therefore, these names should be checked against public documents such as electoral rolls and/or telephone books to determine current names and addresses. Questions will be guided by the themes that emerge from the analysis of the workshop evaluations and will include information on:
  - i. How many and what type of workshops attended;
  - ii. Basic information including age, sex, ethnicity etc.;
  - iii. Memory of the workshop;
  - iv. What did it mean to you;
  - v. What impact did it have on your relationships, relevant values and attitudes and on your behaviour in conflict situations;
  - vi. Any effects on reoffending quantity and type for the prisons sample.

Because the names of attendees have been kept separately from their evaluations, it will not be possible to link current views of the impact of the programme with information reported at the time of the workshop. However, comparisons of data from prison and community workshops will still be possible for both methods. Analysis by other characteristics including age, sex and ethnicity should be possible for the questionnaire data.

#### **Funding available**

Grant \$7,250 from JR McKenzie Trust

#### **References**

- Watts, V. (1998). Stopping Violence in Prisons: An evaluation of the Alternatives to Violence Project Aotearoa programme. A Master of Arts thesis; Auckland University.
- Bitel, M, Bonati, G., Booth, B. and 8 others. (1998). AVP as an agent of change: The pilot evaluation of the Alternatives to Violence Project in three British prisons. A report produced for AVP Britain.
- Curreen, M. (1993). The Alternatives to Violence Project: An evaluation of a programme at Auckland Prison East Division. Unpublished report.  
Append here the information brochures or the brief introduction sheets.

The above is a proposal for an evaluation prepared by Dr Gabrielle Maxwell, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Criminology, Victoria University of Wellington in consultation with the following AVP people: Shirley Roberson, Myra Giese and Dan Cook, 5th March 2001.



## Appendix C : End-of-workshop evaluation form

1

**Written Evaluation AVP Workshop**

**Level:** Basic /Advanced / T4F (please circle one) **Date**.....

**Place**.....

1 What was the **highlight** of this course for you?

.....

.....

.....

2 What **changed** you most inside – and why?

.....

.....

.....

3 In what **different** ways will you deal with violence after **doing** this workshop

.....

.....

.....

4 Was there **anything** you wanted to get out of this workshop that you didn't get?  
Please tell us why you think this happened.

.....

.....

.....

PTO

5 Was there anything you did **not** like about this workshop?

.....  
.....

6 What is your **feedback** for the facilitating team?

.....  
.....  
.....

7 How did you hear about AVP?

.....

8 Are you interested in further AVP training? (tick appropriate bracket/s below)

Yes ( ) No ( ) If yes, Advanced workshop ( )  
Training for Facilitators ( ) -By invitation

9 Any other **comments**

.....  
.....

Name ..... (Optional)  
(be sure to include your name if you wish to do further training)

Age: under 20    20-30    30-40    40+ (please circle one)

Ethnic group.....

Language other than English.....

Please return to: **AVP Aotearoa**  
**PO Box 6296**  
**Te Aro**  
**Wellington**

## Appendix D : Survey questionnaire

<h1 style="margin: 0;">AVP WORKSHOP SURVEY</h1>					<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Office Use Rec/Ny</div>
<p>Dear AVP Workshop participant,</p> <p>Your local AVP Co-ordinator and/or Team Leader have distributed this survey form to you. Your name and address are not held anywhere else.</p> <p>I hope you will take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire; the results will assist AVP to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts. It is totally confidential, so there is no need to write in your name. Participation is voluntary.</p> <p>When completed, simply fold it, put it into the Freepost envelope, and then into the nearest mailbox as soon as possible.</p> <p>Many thanks for your time,          Brian Phillips          (Researcher)</p>					
<p><b>Instructions</b></p> <p>Please tick the boxes to indicate your response: Like this <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If you have made an error, or wish to change your mind, please put a large cross through the wrong response: Like this <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> and then tick the correct response.</p>					
Are you?:	Male <input type="checkbox"/> or		female <input type="checkbox"/>		
Which ethnic group/s do you belong to?:	<input type="checkbox"/> Maori	<input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander	<input type="checkbox"/> Palscha/ European	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Your age group?:	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 20 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 20 to 40 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 41 to 60 years	<input type="checkbox"/> Over 60 years	
At my last AVP workshop, I was:	<input type="checkbox"/> An inmate <input type="checkbox"/> An ex-inmate <input type="checkbox"/> On diversion, probation, or other Order <input type="checkbox"/> Not any of the above				
Which of these AVP workshops have you attended? (Tick each one you have attended)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Basic workshop		<input type="checkbox"/> Advanced workshop		<input type="checkbox"/> Training for facilitators	
			<input type="checkbox"/> Team leader training		<input type="checkbox"/> Other workshop/s
I have you ever facilitated in an AVP workshop? (This includes: apprentice facilitator, facilitator, apprentice team leader and team leader)				<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Page 1 of 4      Please turn over ➡

AVP Workshop Survey

For the following questions, please tick the box that most closely matches your answer.

1. Has AVP helped you to **resolve difficult issues** using peaceful means?

Always	Almost always	Sometimes	A little	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In what way are you able to do this?:

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2. Has AVP helped you to see **other people's point of view**?

Always	Almost always	Sometimes	A little	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In what way has this happened?

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3. Has AVP helped you to have a greater amount of **trust in others**?

Always	Almost always	Sometimes	A little	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In what way do you show this?:

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4. Has AVP helped you to use **more choices** for resolving conflict?

Always	Almost always	Sometimes	A little	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In what way do you do this?:

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5. Has AVP helped you feel greater **respect for yourself**?

Always	Almost always	Sometimes	A little	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How has this shown itself?:

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AVP Workshop Survey

6. Has AVP helped you to take greater **responsibility** for your behaviour toward others?

- |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Always                   | Almost always            | Sometimes                | A little                 | Not at all               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

In what way do you do this?

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7. Has AVP helped you to have a greater **understanding of your feelings and actions**?

- |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Always                   | Almost always            | Sometimes                | A little                 | Not at all               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

What has changed for you?

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8. In what way do you feel that the AVP workshop/s have helped you to change your personal relationships?

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9. What have you found to be the most useful aspect of the AVP workshop/s for your life?

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10. How have the AVP workshops helped you change your approach to conflict?

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AVP Workshop Survey

11. If you have been in prison, how well were you able to apply what you learnt in AVP to your daily life in prison?

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12. If you did an AVP workshop in prison, did it help your return to the general community? In what way?

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13. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of AVP?

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Thank you very much for your participation. Please return this survey in the prepaid envelope provided or to Freepost 159011, AVP Workshop Survey, CV- The counter, Wellington South Post Shop, 92 Riddiford Street, Newtown, Wellington.

If you have any questions about this survey or would like further information please contact either Brian Phillips (Researcher) on (04) 463 6649 or by e-mail [brian.phillips@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:brian.phillips@vuw.ac.nz), or the AVP-A National Coordinator on (06) 364 5069 or e-mail [avpa@clear.net.nz](mailto:avpa@clear.net.nz).

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